

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2006

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members Kreider, Senhauser, Spraul-Schmidt, Sullebarger, Wallace and Raser present. Absent: Chatterjee, Bloomfield and Kirk.

MINUTES

The Historic Conservation Board (Board) unanimously approved the minutes of March 13, 2006 meeting, (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second by Sullebarger) with corrections.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 3458 OBSERVATORY PLACE, OBSERVATORY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented a report on an application to build a one-story rear addition to this property, to extend the front (west) porch 2'-0" and to construct dormers on an existing attached two-car garage.

Ms. Cowden stated that the proposed addition would cover original wood clapboards on the main house and alter two window openings on the rear (east) elevation. Staff is concerned that the distinct massing and form of the house is slowly being overpowered by additions on the rear (east) elevation. However, this elevation has already been modified with several additions, the most recent dating to 1996.

Ms. Cowden stated that staff does not believe that the owner's desire to place outdoor furniture on the porch represents a compelling reason to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness. The porch is a significant, character-defining feature, and the proposed modification would notably alter its relationship to the house and main façade.

With regard to the proposed garage dormers, Ms. Cowden said that staff strongly encourages the applicant to consider removing the shutters from the dormers and modifying the clipped gable roofline to a simpler gable. Staff also felt that a pair of windows would be more appropriate than the proposed design. Jack Gore, the project architect, responded that the thickness of the insulated walls in part dictated the width of the windows.

Mr. Raser questioned Ms. Cowden and stated that if the architectural elements were reused, adding 2'-0" to the porch would not substantially change the character of the building. He asked for examples of specific guidelines that would prevent the applicant from making this modification to the porch. Ms. Cowden read several different guidelines from the Observatory Historic District Conservation Guidelines that discouraged removal of original fabric and character defining features and noted the porch at 3458 Observatory Place is specifically mentioned in the designation report. Mr. Gore indicated that his client was willing to retain the porch in its original configuration.

Ms. Sullebarger asked where the driveway had been historically to establish whether the steps at the north end of the porch could be original. Mr. Gore said that the driveway was located on the north side within a public street. He added that if extended the front of the porch would align with the bay windows on the façade, and that the owners would not object if the porch extension were denied.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Spraul-Schmidt, second Sullebarger) to take the following action:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed addition and the installation of two dormers on the garage with the condition that final drawings and specifications be submitted to the Urban Conservator for review and approval prior to construction.
2. Deny a Certificate of Appropriateness to enlarge the main (west) elevation porch 2 feet finding that the proposed work would change the relationship of the porch to the façade and to the street and relocate original building material.

ZONING VARIANCE, 110 WEST CLIFTON AVENUE, LOT SUBDIVISION, OVER-THE-RHINE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Board agreed that the information included in the staff report was sufficient; there was no further discussion on the item.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Sullebarger, second Raser) to take the following action:

1. Approve the necessary Zoning Variance to permit a rear yard set back of 4 feet for the two-family residential structure and 4 feet front yard set back for the single-family, finding that such relief from the literal interpretation of the Cincinnati Zoning Code will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to property in the district or vicinity where the property is located and is:
 - a. Necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation as not to adversely affect the historic architectural or aesthetic integrity of the district.

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION, WEST FOURTH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT, BOUNDARY INCREASE, CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Mr. Forwood briefly summarized the staff report on the proposed extension of the boundary of the West Fourth Street National Register Historic District. The proposed extension moves the district boundary one block east (to Vine Street) and includes all the buildings along West Fourth Street between Vine and Race Streets (a total of nine buildings.) The original district was designated in 1975 and was expanded once in 1979.

Mr. Forwood indicated that an earlier proposal included only those buildings on the south side of Fourth Street, but that the district was still smaller than identified in the 2003 update of the City Inventory. A further expansion may be proposed later this year.

All of the buildings, except one, contribute to the district's significance; most are substantially unaltered above the first floor. Staff believes that the nomination demonstrates that the properties meet the criteria for listing in the National Register as part of a district. Mr. Raser suggested that historic districts should encompass both sides of a street to include all buildings on that street.

Margo Warminski, Cincinnati Preservation Association, was present to address the Board. She stated that it had taken a significant length of time for this proposal to go through the Ohio Historic Preservation Office process.

Ms. Spraul-Schmidt stated that she would have liked to see a section added to discuss the development of downtown Cincinnati in the context of the contemporary New City movement nationally. This would briefly discuss the then-current theory of urban planning and the emergence of this downtown center different in scale, form and function from that which had preceded it. It would also include the emergence of dry goods stores and department stores at the end of the century and their eventual demise. She agreed to outline her thoughts in an email to Ms. Warminski that would include references to be incorporated into the bibliography.

The Board also agreed that a brief description of the resulting physical environment (building height to street width ratio, for instance) would reinforce the historical information.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Sullebarger, second Raser) to take the following action:

1. Find that the nomination for the West Fourth Street Historic District (Boundary Increase) does sufficiently demonstrate that these properties meet the criteria under Criterion C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Encourage the applicant to evaluate and potentially propose and prepare a nomination for a larger district boundary that would conform to the 2004 Historic Inventory update.
3. Direct staff to forward the Board's findings regarding this nomination to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office prior to the April 7, 2006 meeting of the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board.

ADJOURN

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser,
Chairman

Date: _____